

## **TRIBAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA**

### **Geography**

The Tribal Workforce Investment Area is a combination to the 19 non-Navajo reservations scattered throughout Arizona. The state's Department of Economic Security serves as grant recipient for the area. Eight tribal governments and the Indian Development District of Arizona serve as administrative entities, contracting with the State of Arizona to provide WIA services on the reservations. The Tribal Area's allocations for its various programs, such as adults, dislocated workers, and youth, are distributed to its administrative entities based upon the current population according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

### **Population**

The latest population figures reveal two important characteristics of the Tribal Area: first, there is a higher proportion of youth than there is statewide, and secondly, there is a high proportion of residents whose principal language is not English (but often a native language, such as Hopi).

### **Labor Force**

The labor force of the Tribal Area was estimated at just 25,296 for program year 2002, which is the 12-month period ending in June of 2002. There were 3,267 unemployed, for a fairly high unemployment rate of 12.9 percent. However, this rate was calculated using 1990 census proportions, and therefore, does not take into account the affect the gambling casinos have had in reducing unemployment on the reservations. Next year's report will use the 2000 census figures.

To be counted as unemployed, a person must be actively seeking work. The number does not include those who are "discouraged" because they believe no jobs are available. The "discouraged" are not considered part of the labor force. That might help explain why the Tribal Area's labor force is only 28 percent of its population, while the statewide labor force is 47 percent of the population. The high percentage of youth in the Tribal Area is also a factor here.

### **Employment**

The various social, health, education, and job training programs funded by local, state, and federal governments supply more than 90 percent of all available jobs on the reservations. However, to be counted as employed, Tribal Area residents may work anywhere, on or off the reservations, even in another state.

Gambling casinos on many reservations have significantly reduced unemployment rates there. Since casino jobs often lead to more attractive career opportunities off the reservations, the casino jobs provide more employment opportunities than their numbers might imply.

Coal and copper mining has generated income for some tribes. However, this industry is not anticipated to show job growth over the next two years.

Agriculture is a significant source of income on many reservations. Tribes produce crops such as cotton, alfalfa, wheat, feed grains, lettuce, melons, millet, barley, pistachios, olives, vegetables, and citrus fruits. In addition, some tribes own and operate agricultural-related businesses such as chemical fertilizer plants, cotton gin manufacturing, and grain storage facilities. Some tribes are also involved in the lumber and cattle industries.

Tourism is also a significant source of income for the Tribal Area. National parks, tribally-owned museums, marina/beach and river-rafting activities, lodging facilities, ski resorts, golf courses, and food and beverage establishments are some examples of the tourist industry on the Indian reservations.

Although many Native Americans engage in traditional arts and crafts — like silver and turquoise jewelry making, pottery making, and basket and textile weaving — crafts sales, except by a few well-known people, are generally seasonal. In addition, craft sales do not generate enough income to provide more than a subsistence level of living for most craftspeople.

## **Forecast**

The Department of Economic Security's Research Administration forecasts the Tribal Area labor force will be 25,296 and 25,900 in the programs years ending in June 2002 and June 2003 respectively. This represents an over-the-year growth rate of 2.4 percent. Unemployment rates are predicted to be 12.9 percent in program year 2002 and 12.7 percent in program year 2003. These rates represent 3,267 and 3,286 unemployed residents respectively.

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Research Administration, November 2001.